

April 24 , 2007

Statement by Congressman Pete Stark Expressing Support for Increased Public Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of increasing public awareness of child abuse and neglect. Nearly 900,000 children were found to be victims of abuse and neglect in 2005. This is unacceptable. Congress must take bold action to protect our nation's children.

Abused and neglected children face a trauma that does not end when the abuse stops. They must also contend with numerous future problems stemming from their abuse and neglect, including mental illness, poor academic achievement, and criminal behavior. In addition, abuse and neglect often starts or continues a cycle of abuse where a third of victimized children go on to become abusers themselves.

Congress has taken steps to prevent and ameliorate child abuse and neglect through programs such as the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program, Child Welfare Services, and the Community Based Child Abuse Prevention program. These are all good programs, but Congress and the President have consistently under funded them. For example, in FY 2006, the Community Based Child Abuse Prevention program was under funded by \$38 million. Congress must fully fund these programs at their authorized levels. The fraudulent war in Iraq and tax cuts for the rich has placed us in a difficult fiscal situation. Even so, we must fund the services that protect our most vulnerable children.

By increasing public awareness of child abuse and neglect, we also have an opportunity to implement new policies that address the health and safety of our children. There are 8 million uninsured children in this country. Continuing to deny health care to all children is simply another form of child neglect. We should work to provide health coverage to every child.

I hope that the resolution before us will help to galvanize this body to push for policies that protect and nurture children. The thousands of abused children and the millions of uninsured children deserve our attention and commitment.